65% of the workers respectively are blue collared workers, whereas the Mission in Qatar has reported that approximately 65 to 70% are unskilled and semi skilled workers.

Welfare schemes for workers in Gulf countries

2248. PROF. P.J. KURIEN: Will the Minister of OVERSEAS INDIAN AFFAIRS be pleased to state:

(a) whether Government is contemplating any welfare scheme for the Indians working in Gulf countries;

(b) whether Government has received any representation in this regard;

(c) if so, the details thereof;

(d) the steps Government proposes to take to set up the welfare schemes; and

(e) the details of welfare schemes?

THE MINISTER OF OVERSEAS INDIAN AFFAIRS *(SHRI VAYALAR RAVI)*: (a) to (e) The Government is considering a proposal to establish a welfare fund for the benefit of emigrants. The proposal envisages provision of welfare services to the emigrants at all stages — financial support to meet emigration expenses at the pre-emigration stage, on-site welfare during their stay abroad and need based rehabilitation services after their return to India. The Welfare Fund is likely to be established during the financial year 2008-09. Pravasi Bharatiya Bima Yojna is already being implemented to provide insurance safeguards to the emigrants against unforeseen exigencies. In addition, the Government has launched at Help-line for emigrants, is implementing a scheme for skill upgradation and pre-departure orientation, is setting up a Council for Promotion of Overeseas Employment and is signing MOUs with the receiving countries for the protection and welfare of emigrants.

Financial Assistance to Gram Panchayats

†2249. SHRI RUDRA NARAYAN PANY: Will the Minister of PANCHAYATI RAJ be pleased to state:

(a) the financial assistance being provided to Gram Panchayats by Central Government under Panchayati Raj scheme;

(b) whether it is a fact that funds being given to district panchayats at some places called district council have been curtailed and those funds are being allocated to schemes being implemented under "National Rural Employment Guarantee Act"; and

(c) if so, the actual rights of district panchayats at present and their financial power?

THE MINISTER OF PANCHAYATI RAJ (SHRI MANI SHANKAR AIYAR): (a) The Central Government does not directly send financial assistance to Gram Panchayats: funds meant for Panchayati Raj Institutions are routed through State Governments.

(b) The previous SGRY has been subsumed in NREGA and under NREGA at least fifty percent of the expenditure is mandatorily required to be allocated to the Panchayat at the village level. NREGA also provides for district panchayats to approve the district shelf of projects.

† Original notice of the question was received in Hindi.

(c) The actual financial powers of the District Panchayats are determined through such regulations and executive roles issued thereunder. In respect of NREGA, as stated vide (b) above, at least fifty percent is mandatorily required to be allocated to the panchayat at the village level, and NREGA provides for district panchayats to approve the district shelf of projects.

Delegation of powers to Panchayats

2250. SHRI MATILAL SARKAR: Will the Minister of PANCHAYATI RAJ be pleased to state:

(a) whether the Central Government are aware that the State Government of Tripura has delegated authoritative powers to three-tier Panchayats in respect of different departments including school education;

(b) whether there are occasions like this in other States;

(c) if so, the details thereof;

(d) whether Government is going to adopt regulations to encourage the shifting of supervisory powers to Panchayats for involving people's participation in Government work; and

(e) if so, the details of the programme?

THE MINISTER OF PANCHAYATI RAJ (SHRI MANI SHANKAR AIYAR): (a) to (c) Article 243G of the Constitution provides that the legislature of a State may by law endow the Panchayats with such powers and authority necessary to enable them to function as institutions of self-government and such law may contain provisions for the devolution of powers and responsibilities upon Panchayats for the preparation of plans for economic development and social justice and the implementation of related schemes as may be entrusted to them including those in relation to the matters listed in the Eleventh Schedule that contains a list of 29 matters. All 24 States to which the provisions of Part IX of the Constitution applies have enacted Panchayati Raj legislation, which *inter-alia*, provides for the devolution of powers and responsibilities upon Panchayats at the District, Intermediate and Villages levels. This formal devolution through State legislations needs to be translated into the actual transfer of activities relating to such devolved functions to Panchayats at different levels through executive orders, instructions and administrative arrangements. It has been the endeavour of the Central Government to persuade the States to match the transfer of functions with the corresponding transfer of funds and functionaries, so that Panchayats can perform their roles as institutions of self-government in the spirit of the 73rd Constitutional Amendment.

The Government of Tripura have reported that they had issued orders in August 2007 for transferring some functions to Panchayats that pertain to different departments including primary schools, adult and non formal education, women and child development and social welfare including welfare of the handicapped and mentally retarded with provisions for transfer of functionaries. Devolution of powers to Panchayats has been made by all States in varying degrees. Details of legislative devolution and functional transfer through activity mapping, executive orders and instructions, according to available records is given in the Statement (*See* below).